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HUNTING SUPERSTITIONS IN THE COW CREEK REGION OF SOUTHERN OREGON.

BY KIMBALL YOUNG AND THOMAS D. CUTSFORTH.

The local hunting customs and beliefs in the Cow Creek region of Southern Oregon have had their origin in three distinct cultural backgrounds. These are, first, the practices common to the Cow Creek and Rogue River Indians;¹ second, the French-Canadian hunting superstitions which were introduced into this territory before the middle of the last century by the voyageurs who came into Southern Oregon in the interests of the Hudson Bay Company; third, the set of superstitions which have been transplanted into this locality from the Border States, that is, from the mountain regions of West Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee by early Oregon settlers.

The present paper deals particularly with the superstitions developed around deer hunting. These are largely of two sorts. First, those which are of the nature of avoidances or tabooed acts. Secondly, those which are of the nature of actions which must be performed in order to bring good luck. We may, for our convenience, denominate these as negative and as positive superstitions.

We shall give the negative type first, followed by the positive. We shall indicate the provenience of each particular superstition, so far as this region is concerned. No attempt will be made to unravel the superstition within its own culture setting before it was brought into Oregon.

¹ The Cow Creek and Rogue River (Tututni) Indians belong to the Athapascan stock. The former are really a branch of the Umpqua who formerly lived on the Cow Creek in what is now Douglas County, Oregon. The Rogue River group lived on the river which bears their name and in the adjacent area of Curry County, Oregon. The exact linguistic and tribal relationships of these smaller Oregon tribes has never been thoroughly investigated.

But few of these Indians remain today. Both these groups were early removed to reservations. About 1855 some of Cow Creek group were removed to the Siletz Reservation, but the bulk of them were sent a little later to the Grande Ronde. Of the Rogue River group they were sent first to the Siletz and still later to the Grande Ronde. In 1910 but nine Cow Creek Indians were enumerated in the census of that year. In 1881, there was reported in the census five hundred of the Rogue River Indians, but since that time they have been confused with other neighboring and more distant tribes. It is not known how large a number of these people survive. Cf.: *Indian Population of the United States and Alaska*: Bur. of Census: 1915.

I.

Negative Superstitions or Taboos: Those said to be of Indian origin are as follows:

1. The porcupine should never be killed unless the hunter is lost.
2. When a good shot has been missed, the gun should not be cleaned or oiled until a successful hit has been scored.

3. A hunter should not kill a raven while hunting.

Those of Border States origin are:

4. The knife that is to be used in dressing the deer should neither be sharpened nor whetted previous to the kill.

5. Too many shells should not be taken on a hunt. A modest number is between seven and fifteen.

6. It is decidedly unlucky to hunt on Sunday.

The Hudson Bay group apparently introduced into this region no negative superstitions which have persisted in common practice.

II.

Positive Superstitions. Those of Border States origin are:

1. If when setting out from camp or home to hunt, your dog should stop to defecate, it is necessary to pass the dog before it finishes and moves on.

2. A hat, shirt, shoes, or any other garment which has been worn upon a previously successful ("lucky") hunt should by all means be worn every time one goes out on a fresh hunting expedition.

3. In order to insure "good luck" in the hunt, the first fresh deer dung that is found should be carried in the left shirt pocket. (Known also in Wisconsin; introduced by settlers from Kentucky and Tennessee.)

The positive superstitions of French-Canadian origin are:

4. Whenever a spot is reached where the hunter has previously killed a deer the hat should be lifted in a reverent manner. (Known also in Wisconsin.)

5. When on an extended hunting trip, all members of the party should smear their arms and faces with the blood of the first deer killed.

6. Sunday is a "lucky day" for deer hunting.

Apparently no positive superstitions thought to be of local Indian origin have persisted among the present inhabitants of this region.

In addition to these superstitions, the Hudson Bay group seems to have been responsible by the rules for the division of the spoils. The pelt went to the person who scored the first hit on the game. The carcass of the deer went to the individual who finally killed the animal. This rule is still observed.

From the Hudson Bay source is said to have come the custom that the hunter who has been the most successful during the day's hunt is regarded as a sort of leader or hero for the time being. Generally he is permitted to wear a distinguishing head-gear or a decorated belt. He is relieved of all

camp duties. Furthermore, he is permitted to select the member of the group who is to eat his meal with the fried male organ of a buck upon his plate. This crude raillery was originally designed as a mark of disapproval or as a piece of witticism directed against the hunter who had been most unfortunate in the day's hunting. At the present time, it has degenerated until the person who is known to be the most easily nauseated by such performance is chosen.

III.

Individual hunters in this region tend also to create superstitious observances regarding local hunting territory. Some hunters' personal preferences, become accepted, naturally, by other men who are closely related, either in their family or neighborhood. For instance, certain canyons or ridges are believed to be lucky or unlucky hunting areas. Such places are consequently avoided. Like all superstitions, no doubt, these are at first rationalizations of personal dislike or like for a particular locality. If a hunter never hunts in some part of the country, he will say that he has "never had any luck there." If closely questioned, however, he will usually admit that he has either missed some good shots there or has let a crippled deer escape him. Thus is produced an emotional set against the place.

Mention should also be made of the fact that the difference of attitude toward hunting on Sunday still persists in this region. It is evident from the data above that the Border States tradition was opposed to this practice, while the Canadians reckoned Sunday a day for successful hunting. Opinion is sharply divided on this matter. Some individuals have continued the avoidance of Sunday hunting, others believe the day most propitious.

THIRTY-NINTH ANNUAL MEETING

OF THE

AMERICAN FOLK-LORE SOCIETY.

The thirty-ninth annual meeting of the American Folk-Lore Society was held on December 29, 1927 at Williams Hall, Andover, Mass., with the President, Alfred M. Tozzer in the chair.

The Secretary's report was read as follows:

SECRETARY'S REPORT.

Since we have no detailed information on the membership for 1926, I base the following comparison on that for 1925. The membership of the Society is as follows:

	1925	1927
Honorary members	7	7
Life members	10	10
Active members	383	346
Total	400	366
Subscribing libraries		138

Respectfully submitted,
GLADYS A. REICHARD,
Secretary.

The Secretary's report was accepted.

The Treasurer's report was accepted as corrected. Franz Boas and Gladys A. Reichard were appointed as an auditing committee.

The Editor's report was read and accepted. The Secretary was instructed to send a letter of thanks from the Society to Dr. Elsie Clews Parsons in recognition of the aid she has given us.

REPORT OF THE EDITOR.

During the past year every effort has been made to bring the issues of the *Journal* up to date at the earliest possible occasion. To that end we have transferred the printing of the magazine and of the Memoirs to J. J. Augustin of Glückstadt, Germany, whose facilities for publication are more extended than those of Protat Frères. We have mailed four copies of the *Journal* during the past year, and have three more in page proof. It would be desirable for the committee to authorize a program looking toward the early resumption of current issues in the publication of the *Journal*.

